Stella Maris Catholic Primary School



Religious Education Policy

"Our School Mission is what God sent us into the world to do – to help build His Kingdom through learning, playing, and making friends together. The tools we will use to do this are: Love, Care, Share, Trust and Respect."

Stella Maris Catholic Primary School was established to serve the parish of Our Lady Help of Christians, Folkestone. Its commitment to serving the local faith community is central to its purpose. The role of Religious Education (RE) is crucial to this success.

The school's Teaching and Learning policy recognises that education takes place through both formal classroom instruction and daily routines. Consequently, classroom based Religious Education is supported and reinforced across all aspects of daily school life:

- **The Living Witness of Love:** When pupils are taught to love one another as Christ has loved them, they experience that love from all members of the school community.
- **The Lived Experience of Forgiveness:** When pupils are taught about the forgiveness of a loving God, they directly experience such forgiveness within the school's restorative environment.
- **The Cultivation of Joy:** When pupils are taught that God's goodness to us is a cause for rejoicing, they experience that genuine spiritual joy at school.

Parents send their children to Stella Maris specifically to participate in a lived faith community. Our comprehensive Religious Education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) CURRCIULUM provides pupils with the knowledge needed to become active members of the Church and the targeted experiences that help their faith take root firmly in their lives. In doing so, the school executes a shared mission with the wider Catholic Church.

The Governing Committee, staff and pupils have collaborated on a core Mission Statement that directly governs school life:

> Our school mission is what God sent us into the world to do – to help build His kingdom through learning, playing and making friends together.
>
> The tools we will use to do this are: Love, Care. Share, Trust and Respect

This mission is translated operationally into daily life through the school's core motto: **"To build God's kingdom through learning, playing, and making friends together."** These structural values are embedded into the Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy and the RSE Policy, ensuring that the school's spiritual character is echoed throughout all teaching on moral and civic issues.

Aims and Objectives

Religious Literacy

The definitive 'learning outcome' for every aspect of Religious Education at Stella Maris is to maximize the religious literacy of every pupil. Religious literacy is defined as the ability to engage intelligently, confidently and respectfully in religious and theological dialogue, using appropriate vocabulary while demonstrating an objective knowledge, understanding and evaluation of Catholic belief and practice.

Core Strategic Aims

To satisfy the criteria of the Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI) National Framework, our RE programme promotes:

- Systematic knowledge and understanding of Catholic faith, life, and the person of Jesus Christ.
- Objective awareness to the response of faith to the ultimate questions about human life, its origin and its transcendent purpose.
-Enhanced cognitive and spiritual skills required to engage in critical examination of, and reflection upon, religious belief and practice.

Measurable Curriculum Objectives

In delivering the statutory curriculum, teachers ensure that pupils:

- Develop a deep knowledge of the mystery of God, the Church, and central Catholic doctrines.
- Form an acute understanding of the impact of belief on personal and social behaviour, analysing the relationship between faith and everyday life.
- Strengthen theological reasoning, ethical thinking, and critical questioning through high-level classroom oracy.
- Foster profound respect for truth, alternative viewpoints, and the demands of religious commitment within a multicultural, multi-faith global society.
- Marvel at the wonder and beauty of God's creative love reflected in each person across five key dimensions: Physical, Social, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual.

Curriculum Structure and Time Parity

National Curriculum Framework

Religious education is taught strictly through the National **Religious Education Directory (RED - 2023)** standard, **"To Know You More Clearly,"** as mandated by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The curriculum systematically enables pupils to engage directly with Scripture, Catholic Tradition, and the contemporary lived experience of faith.
With this in mind, we have adopted the published scheme, *Lighting The Path*.

Lighting the Path

To operationalize the RED parameters, Stella Maris utilizes the published syllabus "Lighting the Path"**.** This scheme serves as a structural springboard for a creative, stimulating, and academically rigorous curriculum. It ensures that content is introduced systematically in an increasingly demanding manner across all key stages.

Time allocation

The Governing Committee ensures that Religious Education maintains absolute core parity with English and Mathematics:

- Statutory Time Allocation: RE is strictly allocated at least 10% of the taught week across all cohorts, translating precisely into 135 minutes per week for EYFS/KS1 and 145 minutes per week for KS2.
- Flexible Learning Blocks: While time standards are legally enforced, teachers retain professional flexibility to organize RE into longer, high-impact instructional blocks or frequent localized sessions, provided the 10% benchmark is strictly cleared.

Classroom Learning Environments

Modelling Spiritual Values

Teachers actively model spiritual and intellectual reverence for RE in the same manner as precision methods in other core fields:

- **Classroom Prayer Focal Points:** Every learning space features a dedicated, prominent prayer area containing sacred artifacts (e.g., statues, candles, liturgical cloths, flowers). These are child-centred and adapt systematically to match the changing liturgical colours and scriptures of the Church Year.

- **RE Working Walls:** Every classroom maintains an active RE Working Wall displaying current key concepts, the theological focus, and critical subject-specific vocabulary to support oracy and independent writing.
- **Class Big Book Portfolios:** Alongside individual student workbooks, every cohort maintains a high-quality Class Big Book. These multi-media portfolios record collective classroom experiences, high-level theological debates, drama photos, and group artwork, allowing previous knowledge to remain accessible to all learners.

Sanctuary Spaces

Our Lady, Star of the Sea Chapel

The school's dedicated on-site chapel is open daily to all pupils and staff members. It serves as sanctuary for quiet meditation, spiritual well-being, and smaller, intimate liturgical celebrations.

Peace Garden

Designed a sustainable, maritime-inspired outdoor sanctuary matching Folkestone's coastal identity, this space is utilised directly for environmental stewardship and outdoor class prayer.

Catholic Social Teaching and Pupil Leadership

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is not treated as an isolated topic but is integrated throughout the curriculum, subject design, and daily operations. Guided by Pope Francis's encyclicals *(*Laudato Si' *and* Fratelli Tutti*),* pupils learn to translate Gospel values into measurable local and global justice initiatives.

Pupil-Led Missionary Discipleship – The Sunshine Team

The school's flagship chaplaincy group, the Sunshine Team**,** takes direct structural responsibility for leading the Catholic life, prayer routines, and social action of the school. Their initiatives include:

- The Onsite Food Bank Pantry: Founded and managed entirely by the Sunshine Team under their motto: *"Give what you can, take what you need."* This initiative supports vulnerable local families facing cost-of-living challenges.
- Intergenerational Dementia Friends Project: Pupils execute regular weekly play and music interaction sessions with local elderly citizens experiencing dementia. This is celebrated annually by a major pupil-hosted Summer Tea Party to combat social isolation.
- The Class Bible Ministry: The Sunshine Team raises funds independently to purchase high-quality bibles. They manage the scriptural transition ministry, ensuring every child moving from Key Stage 1 into Key Stage 2 is personally gifted their own Bible to use in school and keep for life.
- Advent Outreach for the Homeless: A targeted winter campaign where pupils organize, package, and distribute vital winter survival packs to homeless individuals across the Folkestone area.
- The CAFOD Big Lent Walk: A whole-school almsgiving and global solidarity campaign that successfully raises over £800 annually for international development and disaster relief.

These cumulative, student-driven actions resulted in the school successfully securing the prestigious Oscar Romero Award.

Inclusion

Religious Education at Stella Maris is fully inclusive. High-quality, adaptive teaching strategies are systematically deployed to ensure that the curriculum remains accessible to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged learners, and those speaking English as an Additional Language (EAL). Alternative tracking systems (such as oral assessments recorded in *Class Big Books* and artistic expressions) ensure that every child can demonstrate theological progress, regardless of their writing capability.

Assessment, monitoring and Evaluation

Teachers assess pupils' progress through formative and summative assessment opportunities within Religious Education. Assessment informs planning and supports pupil progress. The RE Subject Leader monitors standards through lesson visits, pupil voice, work scrutiny and analysis of assessment information.

Leadership of RE

The RE Subject Leader maintains overall responsibility for the curriculum design, standard monitoring, and spiritual direction of the school. Key responsibilities include:

- Delivering continuous professional development (CPD), staff meeting sessions, and induction training packs for new staff members.
- Managing rigorous book scrutinies, learning walks, and internal data moderations.
- Leading the 10-year Deanery Partnership**,** a strategic alliance spanning five primary schools and one secondary Catholic academy. This partnership facilitates cross-school moderation, shared CPD resources, and student portfolio exchanges to maintain Grade 1 standards.

Accountability and Governance

The Academy Governing Committee is highly ambitious for the school's Catholic life. Governors conduct scheduled monitoring visits, review the Catholic Self-Evaluation Document (CSED), and evaluate budget allocations. The Headteacher and RE Lead provide formal reports to the Governing Committee and the Trust Board to ensure full compliance with all Diocesan regulations.

Prayer, Liturgy and The Liturgical Year

Prayer and Liturgy run through all areas of school life, punctuating the school day for all pupils and staff. Acts of worship are child-centred, giving pupils from Early Years to Year 6 the skills to independently plan, lead, and evaluate prayer. The weekly structural pattern is established as follows:

Monday	Class Prayer and Liturgy/Reflection	Student-led classroom prayer and liturgy using scripture frames, focal objectives and traditional prayers.
Tuesday	Celebration of the Word Class Prayer and Liturgy/Reflection	Student-led classroom prayer and liturgy using scripture frames, focal objectives and traditional prayers. Whole school gathering centred on the Sunday Gospel, led by the Headteacher/RE lead.
Wednesday	Class Prayer and Liturgy/Reflection	Student-led classroom prayer and liturgy using scripture frames, focal objectives and traditional prayers.
Thursday	Class Prayer and Liturgy/Reflection	Whole school gathering.

	Prayer and Praise	Student-led classroom prayer and liturgy using scripture frames, focal objectives and traditional prayers.
Friday	Class Prayer and Liturgy/Reflections Celebration Assembly for whole school	Student-led classroom prayer and liturgy using scripture frames, focal objectives and traditional prayers. Whole school gathering to celebrate spiritual, moral, and academic success, closing the week in thanksgiving.

The Sacramental Life: Chapel and Parish Masses

- Whole-School Liturgies: Whole-school Masses are celebrated at least three times a year on Sundays at the parish church and at least three times a year within the school hall for major feasts and Holy Days of Obligation. Pupils lead these liturgies actively by altar serving, reading scripture, singing in the choir, and leading the offertory procession
- Intimate Chapel Class Masses: Operating on a rotational schedule, individual classes gather for intimate, focused Holy Mass inside **Our Lady, Star of the Sea Chapel**. This smaller setting allows children to develop a deep, personal familiarity with the liturgy and take on direct ministerial roles.
- Sacramental Reconciliation: Services are organized seasonally in church during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent.

The Liturgical Calendar and Celebrations

Term 1	• New beginnings – looking forward to our work building God's Kingdom during the coming year
	• Yr R - Welcome Assembly
	• Saints' feast days, such as:
	  ○ St Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist – 21st September
	  ○ Feast of Stella Maris – 27th September
	  ○ Ss Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels – 29th September
	  ○ St Theresa of Lisieux – 1st October
	  ○ Guardian Angels – 2nd October
	  ○ St Francis of Assisi – 4th October
	• Our Lady of the Rosary – 7th October

	Note: October is remembered as the month of the Rosary

Term 2	• All Saints – 1st November (all children to Mass when the feast falls during term time)
	• All Souls – 2nd November
	• Remembrance Sunday
	• Saints' feast days, such as:
	  ○ St Edmund – 20th November
	  ○ St Francis Xavier – 3rd December
	• Christ the King – School/Parish Mass
	• Sundays of Advent
	• Immaculate Conception – 8th December

	Note: November is remembered as the month of Remembrance *During Advent an Advent Candle is used at all Assemblies* *During Advent the children take part in fundraising activities for charities such as CAFOD, The Rainbow Centre etc*

	Christmas is celebrated with Nativity Plays, Carols around the Christmas Tree, a Christingle Service and an End of Term Mass

Term 3	• The Epiphany
	• The Baptism of the Lord
	• Saints' feast days, such as:
	  ○ St John Bosco – 31st January
	  ○ Our Lady of Lourdes – 11th February
	  ○ St Patrick – 17th March
	  ○ St Joseph – 19th March
	• The Presentation
	• Ash Wednesday
	• Mothering Sunday – School/Parish Mass
	• The Annunciation – 25th March

	Note: During Lent the children take part in fundraising activities for charities such as CAFOD *At the end of Term 3 a Christian Passover is celebrated with the children in Years 3 and 6* *Holy Week is celebrated with three assemblies at the end of Term 3 – the story of Palm Sunday (Years R, 1 and 2), The Last Supper (Years 3 and 4), the Passion (Years 5 and 6)* *Lent concludes with an End of Term Mass*

Term 5	• Saints' feast days, such as:
	  ○ St George – 23rd April
	  ○ St Mark, Evangelist – 25th April
	  ○ St Catherine of Siena – 29th April
	  ○ The English Martyrs – 4th May
	• The Ascension
	• Pentecost

	Note: • *May is remembered as the month of Our Lady. During May a whole School Mass takes place, and children are invited to bring in flowers from home to process to Mary Our Mother*

Term 6	• Corpus Christi
	• The Sacred Heart – 12th June
	• Saints' feast days, such as:
	  ○ St Anthony of Padua – 13th June
	  ○ Ss John Fisher and Thomas More – 22nd June
	• Ss Peter and Paul – 28th June (all children to Mass when the feast falls during term time)
	• Year 6 Leavers' Mass

Withdrawal from Religious Education and Prayer and Liturgy

Stella Maris is a Catholic School, and it is expected that parents who choose to send their children here are in full agreement with their children participating in the complete spiritual and liturgical life of the faith community.

However, the school fully acknowledges the statutory legal framework:

- The Right to Withdraw: All parents retain the legal right to withdraw their children from the daily act of worship or from formal Religious Education lessons.
- Operational Process: Any parent considering withdrawal must formally contact the Headteacher to arrange a consultation.
- Alternative Provision: Pupils safely withdrawn from acts of worship or RE lessons are provided with appropriate, high-quality alternative educational activities overseen by school staff.

The following statement of policy is included on our school website:

All parents have a legal right to withdraw their child from the daily assembly or from religious education. Any parent wishing to withdraw a child from either assembly or religious education should contact the Head Teacher. Pupils who are withdrawn from assembly or religious education are provided with appropriate alternative activities.

Signed: …… …… Date: …….
(*Chair of Governing Committee*) (*Head Teacher)*